



# BROWN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

*Providence, Rhode Island 02912*

*Office of the  
University Librarian  
401-863-2162*

August 6, 2003

Ms. Anne Parent  
Office of Library & Information Services  
Library Programs  
Dept. of Administration  
1 Capitol Hill  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Anne:

An increasing number of states have come to recognize that their citizens are best served by true multi-type library cooperation, that is, a system that enables any individual to get the book, article or information s/he needs from any participating institution in the state, without regard to where s/he makes his library "home." Multi-type cooperation recognizes that each participating library has unique resources to bring to the table, in terms of staff as well as collections. It values collaboration to solve common problems, as opposed to institutional self-interest, redundant planning, and the local "not invented here" syndrome. One of the defining characteristics of multi-type cooperation is a focus on user needs and customer satisfaction; while it remains critical that each library be funded to meet the core needs of its own users, multi-type cooperation acknowledges that libraries must freely share their resources if *all* our users are to be well served.

Despite its critical role as a support agency for public libraries, OLIS Library Services has been the strongest voice in Rhode Island for multi-type cooperation and the state's primary agency for articulating the contribution that libraries make to education, to democracy, and to economic development. OLIS/LS enables effective resource-sharing through its support of the statewide delivery service and, perhaps more importantly, by involving all types and sizes of libraries in planning and in developing a vision for the best library services in Rhode Island. While there are a number of organizations that enable discussion and cooperation amongst libraries of a particular type, OLIS/LS is the one agency in Rhode Island that incorporates the voices of all types of libraries in its planning and that reminds us that we are stronger together than separate.

The Brown University Library's mission statement states that, "in support of the University's educational and research mission, (the Library) is the local repository for and the principal gateway to current information and the scholarly record. As such, it is simultaneously

collection, connection, and classroom, primarily for the current and future students and faculty of the University, while also serving other colleagues in the University community and our regional, national, and global communities of learning and scholarship.”

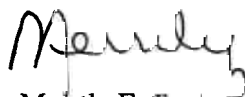
An important facet of the Brown Library mission is our role as *connection* between our users and the world of information outside the University’s walls. Despite the fact that Brown holds more than 3.1 million volumes, subscribes to more than 16,500 serials (including over 5,000 electronic journals), and licenses more than 200 databases, we have long recognized that we are unable to meet the wide range of our users’ needs without access to the collections and expertise of other libraries, large and small, public and private, academic and non-academic. In facilitating these critical relationships, OLIS/LS is and should be a crucial player and resource.

I have been University Librarian at Brown for more than 21 years and have been grateful throughout that time for the interest OLIS/LS has demonstrated in the issues of importance to academic libraries, and to our users. The leadership demonstrated by OLIS/LS, and by its predecessor, the Department of State Library Services, made Rhode Island an early model for multi-type cooperation. It is unfortunate that the funding exigencies of recent years, along with a number of other factors, made it impossible for OLIS to build on that early lead and create a statewide virtual catalog/direct borrowing capacity for Rhode Island. Certainly this project did not stall for want of effort on the part of OLIS!

OLIS/LS contributes to our work in a number of additional ways, from providing an excellent library for professional reference and support, to serving as the home for an exceptional Talking Books program (from which I benefited personally when I was the caregiver for my visually impaired father). OLIS staff members are professionally capable, visionary, and committed to providing the best service to Rhode Island libraries and, more critically, to those we serve. As a librarian, however, I think that OLIS/LS’ most critical role is to demonstrate our state’s commitment to the unique role of libraries as cultural institutions. Libraries, whether public, academic or school-based, make a contribution to our community that is not replicated by schools, museums, theatres, community centers or any other organization. Like the Brown Library, each library is a *collection* of resources, a *connection* to other institutions and amongst library users, and a *classroom* that for generations has functioned as “the people’s university.” Libraries are, moreover, the reflection of our community’s special character and history. Brown’s former president, Vartan Gregorian, called them “the memory of mankind.” Of all our state institutions, OLIS/LS is the agency that reminds our public officials, as well as us, why libraries are important.

I wish you, your staff and OLIS Library Services a long and productive life! All best wishes,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Merrily", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Merrily E. Taylor

Joukowsky Family University Librarian